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## Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. STEVENS).

### PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

O God our rock, exalted above all blessings and praise, the host of Heaven worships You. Today we praise You for the opportunity of serving our country in the Senate. Incline our hearts to do Your will and set a guard over our lips. Help us to see the path You desire us to take as You teach us to do Your will.

Lead our Senators. Revive them so that they will face each challenge with an inexhaustible faith. Direct their steps by Your word and let no evil dominate them. May their faith have feet and hands, a voice, and a heart, that they will seek to serve You by serving others.

Help each of us to strive for truth, justice, and peace. May the lofty ideals we profess shine in our faces and be seen in our lives.

We pray in Your wonderful Name. Amen.

### PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The PRESIDENT pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

### RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

### SCHEDULE

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, this morning we have set aside the first 30 minutes for a period of morning business. We will then proceed to consideration of the Labor-HHS appropriations bill. Senator SPECTER has commitments from several Senators this morning to come offer their amendments. In addition to those to be offered, we already have several pending from yesterday. We will be calling rollcall votes throughout the course of today to dispose of these amendments, and we will announce when Senators can expect those votes.

I remind my colleagues that a cloture motion was filed last night on the Labor-HHS appropriations bill. That cloture vote will occur on Thursday morning. Under rule XXII, Senators have until 1 o'clock today to file their first-degree amendments at the desk. We will finish this bill this week. It is up to the Senate to decide if we are going to be here late Thursday or Friday, but we will finish the bill. If Senators are reasonable in their requests for amendments and debate times, we may well be able to finish tomorrow; if not, we will continue on Friday to finish this final appropriations bill. Again, I congratulate all of our colleagues for sticking together and systematically going through each of the appropriations bills over the last several weeks.

Mr. REID. If I could direct a question to the distinguished majority leader, it is my understanding we are not going to recess at 1:45 for Negroponte. People can go or not, and we will still continue Senate business.

Mr. FRIST. That is correct. We will continue working today. Again, I want to restate the conversation that the distinguished Democratic leader and I had yesterday regarding these votes over the course of the day. We want people to come over on time so we can proceed in a disciplined, orderly way.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

### MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will be a period for the transaction of morning business for up to 30 minutes, with the first half of the time under the control of the Democratic leader and the second half of the time under the control of the majority leader.

The Senator from Washington is recognized.

### MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG PROGRAM

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I am here this morning to talk about a dangerous flaw in the Medicare prescription drug program that is about to take effect. This flaw is a ticking time bomb for more than 6 million Americans, for our communities and our health care providers. That fuse is going to detonate on January 1.

We cannot allow low-income seniors and the disabled to lose their direct coverage. We cannot leave our doctors and hospitals and nursing homes unprepared for the biggest change in decades. And we should not be pushing hundreds of thousands of people who need care onto our local communities. We can't wait. We have to fix this problem today. That is why I will be offering an amendment later this morning.

I have been working with Senators ROCKEFELLER and BINGAMAN to address the immediate crisis. I thank them for their leadership. I have also introduced my own bill to protect our most vulnerable. It is the Medicare HEALS Act, S. 1822.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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